

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO*

EXCERPTS FROM OUR STATE MEDICAL JOURNAL

Vol. VI, No. 3, March, 1908

From some editorial notes:

Pure Milk.—Will we ever have a reasonably pure milk supply? Is it another case of commercial activity versus the survival of the fittest and human inertia? Time will show. Certainly the active work of the Pure Food Commission of the state society is doing something to improve conditions in some parts of the state—notably in the south—and the more recent activity of the California Club and County Medical Society in San Francisco seems to promise some improvement in that section in the future. . . .

One Board or Three?—It is by no means the intention of the journal to enter into a controversy with our osteopathic friends as to the relative merits of regular medicine, osteopathy or any other form or manner of attempting to alleviate the sick or distressed. The old question of one examining board or many is, however, brought up and a few words on the subject may not be amiss. . . .

Business Methods.—Systematic work and careful, exact business methods are not in the slightest degree incompatible with professionalism in its most refined form. Rather is the contrary true. The man who thoroughly systematizes his work, who is niggardly of his time, who arranges his schedule of appointments carefully and sees to it that his most valuable possession—his time—is not stolen by inconsiderate patients, finds himself able to do more things, to read more, to study more and to play more, than the man without system in his work, who finds the day gone, his energies dissipated, with many things left undone and with no inclination to study or play. . . .

San Francisco and the Plague Situation.—A careful survey of the situation in San Francisco presents to the observer certain facts and conditions the knowledge of which comes with a distinct shock. The present campaign may be divided into two clearly marked objectives. The first, of course, is the killing off of rats, and in the prosecution of this work we note that the city is spending some \$12,000, the Federal Government some \$40,000 monthly; to this amount is to be added a sum obtained by subscription from citizens which is now being collected, and will closely approximate a half million of dollars. . . .

From an article on "The Awakening of Public Interest in Sanitation" by William Freeman Snow, A. M., M. D., Associate Professor of Hygiene, Leland Stanford Junior University.

Hygiene and sanitation are as yet vague terms in the vocabulary of the public, but they are terms which are used with rapidly increasing frequency. The logical development of these terms will restrict hygiene to the individual and sanitation to his surroundings. . . .

From an article on "A Plea for United States Army Contract Surgeons" by H. du R. Phelan, M. D., San Francisco.

The untimely death of Major Carroll of the Medical Department of the Army brings out the fact that it was as a contract surgeon that he earned at the cost of his health and of his life the title of "Benefactor of Humanity," by the discovery of the agent of transmission of yellow fever.

* This column strives to mirror the work and aims of colleagues who bore the brunt of society work some twenty-five years ago. It is hoped that such presentation will be of interest to both old and recent members.

From an article on "Crimes? or Maladies?" by Antrim Edgar Osborne, M.D., Santa Clara.

It is not necessary to be very observant to notice, in visiting public penal and charitable institutions, the strong similarity which exists among their inmates. True, some are being punished for crimes, while others are being cared for because of their mental and physical weakness; and yet in institutions, apparently as wide apart as a reform school and a home for feeble-minded, you will see the same cast of features and very many of the same physical characteristics. . . .

From some county society reports:

Alameda County.—The society was called to order by President E. M. Keys, owing to the absence of Past President Dr. Daniel Crosby. . . .

The paper of the evening was presented by Dr. O. D. Hamlin, under the title of "Surgical Suggestions and Observations." Preparatory treatment is an important feature in all operative work. The condition of the kidneys and gastro-intestinal tract is most important. The majority of surgical work is not emergency, and the condition of the patient will often prove more serious than the operation. . . .

Sonoma County.—Dr. George H. Evans gave us a talk on the plague in San Francisco. He thought that Sonoma County should take measures to prevent the plague from her territory. He said that one-half per cent of rats were infected in September in San Francisco, and that the percentage had increased till January gave two per cent. . . .

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

By GILES S. PORTER, M. D.

Director

California Public Health in 1870.—The committee on hospitals of the California Legislature of 1870 reported out favorably a bill which provided for the organization of the California State Board of Health. The attitude of the members of the senate committee is indicated in the report which accompanied the recommendation and which reads, in part, as follows:

"We believe that whatever relates to life and the promotion of health is of paramount importance to the human family and that a community ignorant of properly collected facts concerning its vital history is culpably neglectful and but feebly defended against the 'pestilence that walketh in darkness and destroyeth at noonday.' This belief is strengthened by what is now continually afforded in the happy results of domestic and civic hygiene, wherever practiced, urged by the progressive minds of the medical profession. . . . We confidently believe that whatever will tend to enlarge our knowledge, not only of preventive diseases but also of the lengthening out of human life, will most surely subserve the best interests of the people, and must prove of vast benefit to the state from an economical point of view. Knowledge is what is wanted, to be diffused and spread broadcast over the land, to be brought within the reach of all classes, and especially workingmen. Every day of sickness, whether produced from any one of the thousand circumstances intimately connected with the several trades and vocations, insalubrity of the workshop, the city, village, or domicile, or by accident, is indeed so much cash capital deducted from the fund upon which they and their families can alone depend for support. Yet it is frequently the case that we overlook every principle of hygiene and therefore regularly pay the penalty imposed by the moloch of preventable disease, as is demonstrated in the crowded condition of county hospitals and lunatic asylums.

Not humanity, merely, but a wise policy, therefore, unite in calling upon us to do all that can be done to foster and promote sanitary investigations.